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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/PD,AF/E
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SUBJECT: POST'S PD EFFORTS HELP ERITREAN STUDENTS STUDY IN
THE U.S.

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Despite poor bilateral relations and Eritrea's fledgling education system, Post's PD efforts regularly assist hundreds of Eritreans interested in educational opportunities in the United States. Post operates an educational advising system that provides students with materials on U.S. universities, assists with standardized testing such as the TOEFL and SAT, and provides information on scholarships and other funding opportunities. End Summary.

¶2. (U) In 2006, the University of Asmara disbanded and broke off into "separate colleges." Unfortunately, disorganization and unqualified teachers plague the Eritrean tertiary education system. Additionally, the Fulbright and international exchange programs were terminated as a result of the condition of the colleges and the deteriorating bilateral relationship with the United States. These deficits have left many motivated students without educational opportunities that would provide them an ability to compete in the global economy.

¶3. (SBU) Eritrean students that would like to continue their education in the United States suffer significant challenges. Embassy Asmara has not provided visa services since February ¶2007. Currently, Eritrean exit visas are not typically granted to women under the age of 46 and men under the age of ¶54. In addition, all Eritrean youth must perform compulsory military service that may last indefinitely.

¶4. (U) Despite these challenges, Embassy Asmara's Public Diplomacy educational advising continues to provide access to educational opportunities by providing instruction and materials for colleges, universities, and scholarships to hundreds of high school students. Public Diplomacy staff also meet with interested undergraduate and graduate students twice per week. From April 2008-March 2009, a total of 2,547 interested students met with Public Diplomacy staff to discuss educational opportunities. In addition, the GRE, TOEFL, and SAT are offered multiple times per year at an approved testing site in Asmara. PD's educational advising program provides preparation material for each of these tests and assistance with registering for the exams.

¶5. (U) Post's efforts directly contributed to the 163 Eritrean students studying at American universities and colleges, a number which puts Eritrea in the top 50% in the region for international students.

MCMULLEN